

**Title 6--DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Division 10—Commissioner of Higher Education
Chapter 2--Student Financial Assistance Program**

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

6 CSR 10-2.190 A+ Scholarship Program

PURPOSE: This rule sets forth the policies of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education regarding institutional and student eligibility for student financial assistance under the A+ Scholarship program.

(1) Definitions.

(A) Academic year shall be twenty-four (24) semester or trimester credit hours, thirty-six (36) quarter credit hours, or nine hundred (900) clock hours, and at least thirty (30) weeks of instructional time for a credit hour program or at least twenty-six (26) weeks of instructional time for a clock hour program.

(B) A+ Scholarship shall mean the tuition reimbursement program set forth in subsections 7. through 9. of section 160.545, RSMo.

(C) A+ tuition reimbursement shall mean an amount of money paid by the state of Missouri to a qualified student under the A+ Scholarship for costs related to tuition, general fees, and up to fifty percent (50%) of book costs, subject to state appropriations, after federal sources of funding have been applied.

(D) Award year shall be from July 1 of any year through June 30 of the following year.

(E) CBHE shall mean the Coordinating Board for Higher Education created by section 173.005.2., RSMo.

(F) Department shall mean the Department of Higher Education created by section 173.005.1., RSMo.

(G) Federal sources of funding shall mean grant funds made available directly to students by the federal government and shall not include any funds that must be repaid or work-study funds.

(H) Full-time student shall mean a student who, regardless of the course delivery method, is enrolled in at least twelve (12) semester hours, eight (8) quarter hours, **twenty-four (24) clock hours per week**, or the equivalent in another measurement system, but not less than the respective number sufficient to secure the certificate or degree toward which the student is working in no more than the number of semesters or their equivalent normally required by the institution for the program in which the student is enrolled. Provided, however, that an otherwise eligible student having a disability as defined by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101–12213) who, because of his or her disability, is unable to satisfy the statutory minimum requirements for full-time status under federal student financial aid programs included in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 shall be considered to be making satisfactory academic progress, as defined in subsection (1)(P) of this rule, while carrying a minimum of six (6) credit hours or their equivalent at the approved institution.

(I) Good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement shall mean, by the deadline established by the department, being eligible to complete and completing the federal need-based aid application form as prescribed by the United States Department of Education (USDE). For students whose parents refuse to provide financial information, the application form must, at a minimum, include the dependent student's financial information. For students attending institutions that do not participate in the federal Title IV student financial aid programs, completion of the predictor tool for federal Title IV student financial aid eligibility approved by the USDE is acceptable.

(J) His, him, or he shall apply equally to the female as well as the male sex where applicable in this rule.

(K) Initial recipient shall mean a student who qualifies under subsection 7. of section 160.545, RSMo, and this rule, and who has made a good faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement, and has not received A+ tuition reimbursement in any prior award year.

(L) Participating institution shall mean a Missouri public community college, a public vocational or technical school, or a two (2)-year private vocational or technical school meeting the requirements set forth in subsection 9. of section 160.545, RSMo, that has entered into a participation agreement for the A+ Scholarship program with the department.

(M) Partnership shall mean a written agreement between two (2) or more institutions, at least one (1) of which must be an A+ participating institution, providing for the processing and delivery of A+ tuition reimbursement.

(N) Renewal recipient shall mean a student who received A+ tuition reimbursement, **or whose A+ award was reduced to zero upon application of federal sources of funding**, in a prior award year, qualifies under subsection 7. of section 160.545, RSMo, and who has made a good faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement.

(O) Repeat coursework shall be any coursework for which the student has been assigned a grade under the institution's standard grading policy, excluding coursework for which the student was placed in an incomplete or withdrawn status, in a previous term.

[(P) Satisfactory academic progress shall be a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of at least two and one-half (2.5) on a four-point (4.0) scale, or the equivalent on another scale, and, with the exception of grade point average, as otherwise determined by the participating institution's policies as applied to other students at the participating institution receiving assistance under federal Title IV student financial aid programs. The calculation of CGPA shall be based on the participating institution's policies as applied to other students in similar circumstances.]

~~[(Q)]~~(P) Tuition and fees shall mean any charges to students classified as tuition and any institutional fees charged to all students, excluding program-specific fees.

~~[(R)]~~(Q) USDE shall mean the United States Department of Education.

(2) Responsibilities of Participating Institutions.

(A) Only institutions who have entered into a participation agreement with the department may receive reimbursement under the A+ Scholarship program.

(B) Participating institutions shall meet the following requirements:

1. Before requesting reimbursement for an initial recipient, verify the following:

A. The student has met the eligibility requirements listed in section (3) of this rule through collection of a high school transcript bearing the official A+ seal;

B. The eligible student is enrolled as a full-time student, except as provided in subsection (1)(H) of this rule; and

C. The student has made a good faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement, except as provided in subsection (1)(I) of this rule;

2. Before requesting reimbursement for a renewal recipient, verify the following:

A. The eligible student is enrolled as a full-time student, except as provided in subsection (1)(H) of this rule;

B. The student has made a good faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition, except as provided in subsection (1)(I) of this rule; and

C. The student is maintaining satisfactory academic progress;

3. Comply with the institutional responsibilities required in 6 CSR 10-2.140(5), with the exception of 6 CSR 10-2.140(5)(A)5.; and

4. Verify federal sources of funding are applied correctly to tuition, general fees, and up to fifty percent (50%) of book costs as specified in subsection (4)(K) of this rule.

(C) Partnerships must comply with the following:

1. Reimbursement will only be made to A+ participating institutions;
2. Reimbursement will only be made for coursework actually delivered by a participating institution;
3. Reimbursement may be requested by only one (1) participating institution as specified in the agreement and must be at a tuition rate consistent with the rate charged to other students enrolled in the course;
4. When a partnership includes only one (1) A+ participating institution, the student must be considered to be enrolled full time at the participating institution;
5. When two (2) or more A+ participating institutions are involved in a partnership, students must be enrolled in sufficient hours at a combination of the participating institutions to be considered to be enrolled full time as defined in this rule; *[and]*
6. *[Institutions entering into partnerships must provide to the department any requested documentation pertaining to the processing and delivery of A+ tuition reimbursements.]* **When one or more A+ institutions are involved in a partnership or consortium agreement, a student's federal sources of funding must be apportioned between all institutions included in the agreement in proportion to the student's enrollment at each institution; and**
7. **Institutions entering into partnerships must provide to the department any requested documentation pertaining to the processing and delivery of A+ tuition reimbursements.**

(3) Eligibility Policy.

- (A) To qualify for A+ tuition reimbursement, an initial recipient must meet the following criteria:
1. Meet the requirements set forth in subsection 7. of section 160.545, RSMo;
 2. Be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or otherwise lawfully present in the United States, in accordance with section 208.009, RSMo;
 3. Enter into a written agreement with the A+ designated high school prior to high school graduation;
 4. Graduate from an A+ designated high school with an overall grade point average of at least two and one-half (2.5) on a four-point (4.0) scale, or the equivalent on another scale;
 5. Have at least a ninety-five percent (95%) attendance record overall for grades nine through twelve (9–12);
 6. Have performed fifty (50) hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring, of which up to twenty-five percent (25%) may include job shadowing;
 7. Beginning with the high school senior class of 2015, *[have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the official Algebra I end-of-course exam or complete the first semester at a postsecondary institution with a minimum of twelve (12) hours or the equivalent and a two and one-half (2.5) grade point average prior to receiving A+ tuition reimbursement;]* **meet one of the following, unless the A+ school district has met all of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's requirements for waiver of the Algebra I End of Course exam for the recipient:**
 - A. **Have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the official Algebra I end-of-course exam, or a higher level DESE approved exam in the field of mathematics; or**
 - B. **Complete the first semester at a postsecondary institution with a minimum of twelve (12) hours, excluding remedial or developmental coursework, and achieve a two and one-half (2.5) grade point average prior to receiving A+ tuition reimbursement. Reimbursement will not be made retroactive for the first semester;**
 8. Have maintained a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol;
 9. Be admitted as a regular student and enroll in and attend on a full-time basis a participating institution, except that students in the following circumstances may be enrolled less than full time:
 - A. The student is enrolled in all of the available hours applicable to his program of study in a given term;
 - B. The student is participating in a required internship; or

C. The student is enrolled in prerequisite courses that do not require full-time enrollment;
10. Not be enrolled or intend to use the award to enroll in a course of study leading to a degree in theology or divinity; *[and]*

11. Not have a criminal record preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid~~[/]; and~~

12. Meet the institution's definition of satisfactory academic progress, including any GPA requirement included as part of that definition.

(B) To qualify for tuition reimbursement under the A+ Scholarship program, a renewal recipient must meet the following criteria:

1. Be admitted as a regular student and enroll in and attend on a full-time basis a participating institution, except that students in the following circumstances may be enrolled less than full time:

A. The student is enrolled in all of the available hours applicable to his program of study in a given term;

B. The student is participating in a required internship; or

C. The student is enrolled in prerequisite courses that do not require full-time enrollment;

2. Maintain *[satisfactory academic progress]* **a cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of at least two and one-half (2.5) on a four-point (4.0) scale, or the equivalent on another scale, and, with the exception of grade point average, as otherwise determined by the participating institution's policies as applied to other students at the participating institution receiving assistance under federal Title IV student financial aid programs. The calculation of CGPA shall be based on the participating institution's policies as applied to other students in similar circumstances; and**

3. Make a good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition before the award is disbursed but no later than the deadline established by the CBHE.

(C) The department will review written appeals of its eligibility policy in the following circumstances:

1. The student failed to make a good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition; or

2. The student failed to meet the grade point average requirement as a result of a documented medical reason.

(4) Award Policy.

(A) A+ tuition reimbursement for institutions with credit-hour programs shall occur each semester within one (1) award year.

(B) A+ tuition reimbursement for institutions with clock-hour programs shall be made in installments determined by the department annually.

(C) Student eligibility for the A+ Scholarship expires at the earliest of the following, except a student who is eligible at the beginning of a term may receive A+ tuition reimbursement for the full term in which the expiration criterion is met:

1. Forty-eight (48) months after *[completion of high school coursework]* **high school graduation as documented on the high school transcript;**

2. Receipt of an associate's degree; or

3. Completion of one hundred five percent (105%) of the hours required for the program in which the student is currently enrolled.

A. Calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) shall include **all hours accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution from an institution that is ineligible for A+ participation. The calculation shall also include:**

(I) All known hours completed at any participating A+ institution, including those earned as part of coursework designated as remedial or developmental, **prior to receipt of a certificate; *[and]*or**

(II) *[All hours accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution from an institution that is ineligible for A+ participation.] All hours accepted in transfer into a related, higher level certificate or degree after receipt of an initial certificate.*

B. Calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) shall not include *[the following:]* **hours earned at a postsecondary institution that is ineligible for A+ participation that are not accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution. The calculation also shall not include:**

(I) Postsecondary hours earned for work performed before high school graduation. Such hours shall include, but not be limited to, those earned through dual credit, dual enrollment, technical education articulation, Advanced Placement, or international baccalaureate programs; *[and]or*

(II) *[Hours earned at a postsecondary institution that is ineligible for A+ participation that are not accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution.]* **Hours earned for an initial certificate not accepted in transfer into a related, higher level certificate or degree.**

(D) If an initial recipient is unable to enroll or a renewal recipient ceases attendance for the purpose of providing service in any branch of the armed forces of the United States, the eligibility of the student will be *[extended]* **deferred** for the period of the service as documented on the student's DD214 form and all remaining eligibility, **not to exceed 48 months**, will be retained if the student returns to full-time status within twelve (12) months of the end of military service and provides verification to the department that the military service was satisfactorily completed. **Calculation of the twelve (12) months will begin on the first of the month following the student's discharge from service. The months of remaining eligibility will be calculated from the first day of the month following the student's return to full-time status.**

(E) Reimbursement will be as specified for the following categories of coursework:

1. Completed coursework*[, including remedial coursework,]* for which a grade is assigned under the institution's standard grading policy, **including remedial coursework and coursework assigned a grade of Incomplete**, and that is required by the institution for the completion of a certificate or degree will be reimbursed*[. The amount of reimbursement paid for coursework for which a standard grade was not assigned, including coursework for which the student was placed in an incomplete or withdrawn status], [will be deducted from subsequent reimbursement requests for the student];*

2. *[Repeat coursework will not be reimbursed; and]* **The amount of reimbursement paid for coursework for which a standard grade was not assigned, including coursework from which the student officially or unofficially withdrew, or was terminated, is not eligible for reimbursement. Institutions can use any of the following options to adjust a student's award amount to meet this requirement:**

A. Deduct the amount reimbursed for such coursework from subsequent reimbursement requests;

B. Omit such coursework from the current reimbursement request; or

C. Return the amount reimbursed for such coursework in accordance with subsection 6 CSR 10-2.140(5)(C);

3. *[Coursework that is part of a higher level certificate or a degree that is taken after receipt of a certificate will be reimbursed provided that the certificate or degree is in a field related to the original certificate received.]* **Repeat coursework will not be reimbursed; and**

4. **Coursework that is part of a higher level certificate or a degree that is taken after receipt of a certificate will be reimbursed provided that the certificate or degree is in a field related to the original certificate received.**

(F) The amount of the A+ tuition reimbursement must be calculated based on the remaining costs of actual tuition and fees after any federal sources of funding have been applied and any deductions have been made for reimbursement of coursework for which a standard grade was not assigned, including coursework *[for which the student was placed in an incomplete or withdrawn status]* **from which the student officially or unofficially withdrew, or was terminated.**

(G) The amount of the A+ tuition reimbursement is subject to legislative appropriation.

(H) If the appropriated funds exceed the amount necessary to fund tuition and fees, up to fifty percent (50%) of book costs may be reimbursed.

(I) If insufficient funds are available to pay all eligible students the full amount of tuition and fees calculated in subsection (4)(F) of this rule, the department may take any of the following measures to address the shortfall in order to ensure the A+ reimbursement does not exceed the appropriation:

1. Reduce the number of hours eligible for reimbursement; or

2. If projections indicate that the measure cited above is inadequate to address the funding shortfall, the department shall, as soon as may practicably be accomplished, make available for public comment a plan containing at least two (2) options to ensure that total A+ reimbursements do not exceed the appropriation. Such plan shall be distributed to all participating institutions and the department shall accept public comments on the plan for no less than thirty (30) days before publication in a CBHE board book. No plan for accommodating the additional shortfall shall be approved before it has been on the agenda of a regularly scheduled CBHE meeting and an opportunity for public comment at the CBHE meeting has been provided.

(J) The hourly tuition rate used to calculate the A+ tuition reimbursement shall not exceed the published standard per credit hour tuition rate charged by Linn State Technical College.

1. Institutions with high need programs that have tuition charges above this limit may apply to the department for a waiver of this requirement on a program-by-program basis.

2. The federal credit hour to clock hour conversion calculation will be applied to institutions with clock hour programs.

(K) Financial aid must be applied to tuition and general fees in the following order:

1. First, all available federal sources of funding; and

2. Second, A+ tuition reimbursement.

(L) Award amounts may be increased or decreased at the department's discretion based on availability of funds for distribution during the award year.

(M) A student who has been denied A+ tuition reimbursement for lack of satisfactory academic progress may not receive another A+ tuition reimbursement until the enrollment period after the applicable standard has once again been met.

(N) No A+ tuition reimbursement will be made retroactive to a previous award year. An A+ tuition reimbursement will be made retroactive to a previous semester or payment period only upon the sole discretion of the department.

(O) A+ tuition reimbursement will be made only after institutional certification of the student's eligibility and the amount of the A+ tuition reimbursement.

(P) An eligible student's failure to provide required information by the established deadlines may result in loss of the A+ Scholarship for the period covered by the deadline.

(Q) The CBHE has the discretion to withhold payments of any A+ tuition reimbursements after initiating an inquiry into the eligibility or continued eligibility of a student or into the participation status of an institution.

(R) An eligible student may transfer the A+ Scholarship from one (1) participating institution to another without losing eligibility for assistance, but the department shall make any necessary adjustments in the amount of the award.

(5) Information Sharing Policy. All information on an individual's A+ Scholarship application will be shared with the financial aid office of the institution to which the individual has applied, or is attending, to permit verification of data submitted. Information may be shared with federal financial aid offices if necessary to verify data furnished by state or federal governments as provided for in the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. sections 552, 552a.

AUTHORITY: section 160.545, RSMo Supp. 2010 and Executive Order 10-16, dated January 29, 2010. Original rule filed Feb. 17, 2011, effective Oct. 30, 2011.*

**Original authority: 160.545, RSMo 1993, amended 2002, 2008, 2009, 2010.*